

# ENTER CAMERIMAGE

The Polish cinematography festival offering Australians a unique opportunity to attend master-classes, workshops, panel discussions and technological displays – **by Ashley Barron**



Camerimage Festival Centre - PHOTO by Natalia Mentkowska

For anyone wishing to attend the numerous Cinematography events in Hollywood or around the world, or who dream of simply engaging their hero in conversation about the craft, then Camerimage provides the incredible opportunity not only to attend workshops but to be a participant in them. To get your hands on the latest equipment and talk with colleagues at all stages of their careers.

Ben Knott ACS says that it wasn't until he quizzed ACS President Ron Johanson ACS about the festival that he got the response ***"Camerimage is something every Cinematographer must experience."*** and he made up his mind to go. Knott's agent also made sure he understood the gravity of having a film screen at Camerimage.

The beauty of Camerimage begins at its core. Founded by its Festival Director Marek Zydowicz, a respected Polish academic who, though not a cinematographer, has just as much zeal and passion for the art as the festival's attendees. He saw that "the role of cinematographers and their importance as contributors... is usually under-appreciated". He contacted acclaimed Cinematographers such as Vittorio Storaro AIC ASC and Sven Nykvist FSF ASC, along with several A-list directors, and with their support launched the festival in 1993. Camerimage has been built with love, respect and care for Cinematography and Cinematographers. It is formulated for those who live and breathe this craft; sponsored by the Polish Arts & Culture Council, and by vendors from around the world.

There is no buying or selling, no big deals being made. Very few producers, directors or actors attend, although all are welcomed. This is an inclusive event with open doors for everyone from the newbies to the masters.

Awards form a relatively small part of the proceedings; the focus remains on the community and the craft.

Denson Baker ACS who attended Camerimage as a student in 2000 with his AFTRS nominated film *Intransit*, described it as the time of his life. "The experience really opened my mind to a whole new appreciation of world cinema and allowed me to feel that even as a boy from Perth I could still be respected as an artist. It is a feeling and a respect that we don't always feel when in Australia." While at the festival Denson was personally asked by László Kovács ASC to participate in his master-class after meeting

## **"IT'S ONE OF THE ONLY EVENTS IN THE WORLD WHERE WE, THE CINEMATOGRAPHERS, ARE THE CELEBRITY."**

the previous night. He did shots of Polish Vodka in a bar with Phendon Papamichael GSC ASC as he described his latest music video and what it was like working with Wim Wenders. "That year we saw Rodrigo Prieto ASC take out the Golden Frog for *Amores Perros*. We met David Lynch and Frederick Elms on closing night of the festival, bummed a cigarette from Freddy Elms and chatted to him in the stairwell. You don't get those kinds of opportunities very often."

Australians have been no stranger to Camerimage, flocking to Poland since the beginning. Geoffrey Simpson ACS was the first Australian to win the Golden Frog in main competition for his work on *Shine* in 1996. AFTRS student Danny Featherstone, who was awarded the Golden Tadpole for short *Great Falls*, followed in the same year Mike Molly ACS BSC became the first Australian to be on the Jury. Later in 2003 Peter Weir & Russell Boyd ACS ASC became the first and

only Australians to pick up the Special Award for Duo Cinematographer/Director. 2009 saw Sydney-born Murray Fredericks take away Best Short Documentary award for *Salt*, and 2010 was a huge year where Greig Fraser ACS ASC won the Cinematography in Music Video category, and Adam Arkapaw ACS & David Michod won in the Emerging Cinematographer & Emerging Director categories for *Animal Kingdom*. 2011 saw John Seale AM ACS ASC bestowed with a Lifetime Achievement Award.

Peter Weir has not only been one of the Australian Directors honoured at the festival, but Camerimage founder Marek Zydowicz

and his team literally helped Weir cast *Master & Commander*. It is the ongoing Australian presence at Camerimage that is not only indicative of our general quality as practitioners, but it is also crucial for our community as a whole.

We join the conversation and plug ourselves into the global scene. It is our responsibility to bring ourselves into the forefront of the industry and the ACS is now part of the European Federation of Cinematographers (IMAGO). The more of an Australian presence at Camerimage, the more of a voice we give to our community.

**Ashley Barron first attended Camerimage when she was nominated for the Golden Tadpole in 2013 for Best Cinematography in a Student Short. Barron again visited Poland in 2014 to cover the festival for the ACS, sponsored generously by ARRI Australia.**